

The Therapeutic Effect of Para-Aminobenzoic Acid in Louse Borne Typhus Fever.

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charts.

Abstract : The authors tried para-aminobenzoic acid in the treatment of 20 cases of louse typhus fever in the Cairo Fever Hospital of which a special ward was placed under the supervision of the USA Typhus Commission. Although the number of cases was not large, they were so carefully controlled that the favourable results constitute strong evidence in favour of the use of para-aminobenzoic acid in the treatment of louse typhus fever.

efficacy of the drug. Full details, including temperature charts, are supplied in 17 cases belonging to the 18-45 age group, and of 9 comparable controls consisting of alternate admissions. Altogether, there were 17 patients belonging to the age group whose treatment was started within the first seven days of the illness and 9 control patients comparable in all respects except that the drug was not given. Two patients whose treatment started on the 8th and 9th days, and one aged 70 were excluded from the comparison.

The total duration of the febrile period in the 17 test patients averaged 12.5 days, whereas in the 44 controls 18.5 days. The average severity of the illness was much less among the treated; 11 of these had very mild attacks as contrasted with only one of the controls. Only two of the treated had severe attacks, whereas 31 of the controls had (18), very severe (5), or fatal (8), illnesses.

A remarkable feature of the illness among the treated was that in 9 cases there was a secondary rise of temperature varying from a brief subfebrile relapse to one of moderately high temperature lasting several days. These recurrences of the fever started soon after the end of the course of treatment by the drug; none of the treated had severe symptoms; the duration of the secondary fever is included in the estimate of the average duration of the fever among the treated cases.

The results were distinctly more favourable in the patients whose treatment was started early than in those who came under treatment on the 6th or 7th day. No secondary fever was observed in the two patients treated from the 8th or 9th days onwards. In the case of the aged 70 death was probably hastened by the drug, which was given to him in a large dose, collapsed and was aspirated into his lung, causing acute bronchitis.

A general tendency to leucopenia was observed among the treated; in two cases the white count fell below 3,000 per cmm. and the treatment was suspended.

The initial dose was 4-8 grammes; thereafter 2.0 gm. were given every two hours until the temperature became normal, but the dosage was controlled by frequent estimations of the blood level of the drug; the method adopted was one used for determining the sulphanimide content of the blood.

The para-aminobenzoic acid was given in powder form, suspended in a 2 per cent, solution of bicarbonate of soda sufficient to keep the urine approximately neutral and to prevent vomiting caused by the acidity of the drug.

The urinary output was maintained at 1,500-3,000 cc. in 24 hours to prevent over-concentration of the drug in the blood, and the toxic symptoms that resulted were avoided. The optimum dosage of the drug is not yet known. The mode of action was probably by inhibiting the multiplication of the rickettsiae and so allowing the natural defences of the body to be mobilized before serious damage could result. The occurrence of a secondary rise of temperature after omission of the drug was thought to favour the diagnosis. The paper contains a table showing the chief data connected with all the treated cases.

The trial of the drug was suggested by the favourable results obtained by S and ANDERSON (1942) in the treatment of the disease in white mice.

Other reports, including the work of ANDREWES, KING, and VAN DEN ENDE [t 1945, v. 42, 20] were received while the work was in progress.

John W. D. Megaw.

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